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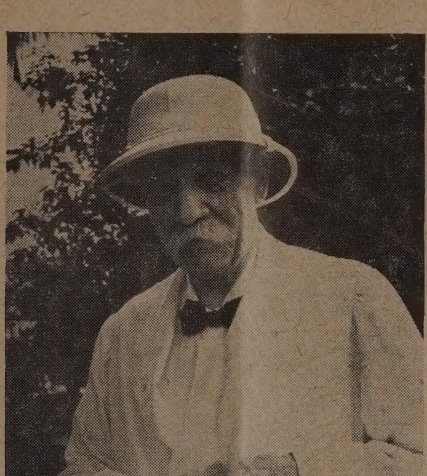
THE UNITARIAN

A MAGAZINE FOR FREE CHRISTIANS



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THE MAN ABOVE ALL CHURCHES

Dr. Albert Schweitzer

By Magnus C. Ratter

Editor's note: Continuing the series "These are Unitarians," it would be presumption to include Albert Schweitzer under a denominational label; but, as the Rev. Magnus Ratter shows in this article, it is impossible to leave out a man who has so identified himself with Liberal Christianity as Dr. Schweitzer.

To-day is but lengthened yesterday: thus all great men are determined by their neighbours, their language, their inheritance. If it is possible to say that a Finnish composer writes even music with a Finnish accent, even more so the leader of men, physical, mental or spiritual, is but his people come to large scale.

Perhaps only in chess or science is the brain of man independent of his motherland. Certainly in Schweitzer one can discern his homeland in all

that he has done, in all that he has written. As much in his books on Bach, Jesus and Ethics, as in the bones of his face, one can discern that he is the peasant from Alsace come to large scale.

Though his brain can use all the words of the university, use them in fit and apt manner, he remains a peasant. Though he is the master of his musical affection, Bach; though he is the master of his instrument, the organ; Schweitzer remains a peasant, the mud of the field is thick on his boots.

He was born the son of the manse, but he was much more the son of his countryside. Analysis and contrast of every aspect of his activity from ethics to orange growing, all this clearly shows that Schweitzer remains Alsatian; he is never Russian, never Italian. Deep analysis, skilled contrast of much of his work and thought will show that he is not fully German, not fully French, he is Alsatian.

This also explains why we cannot take a label from Essex Hall, one mood of the English mind, to say that he is a Unitarian. It is the history of his land, the story of his people, that explains why Roman Catholic and Protestant are both able to esteem Schweitzer: they feel, rightly so, that he is a Christian. This could not be as accurately said of Unitarians in England or America, for their history gives to the name Unitarian a breadth of meaning not possible in Alsace.

Yet Schweitzer has accepted honorary membership of a Unitarian church in Berlin; he has sent friendly messages to the International Association for Religious Freedom. Does this bring him within our community? We must be watchful not to force the elephant into our dog-kennel, proud as we may rightly be to dwell there. Humanists too, have tried to sa that Schweitzer is one with then He has probably sent friendl messages to numerous bodies.

Of one matter we can be sur Schweitzer is a Liberal Christia If the red tradition in wester history comes through Athanasiu now known as orthodoxy; if th purple tradition comes through Ariu now known as Liberal Christianit Schweitzer is the Liberal.

Orthodox writers may admire hi life, yet handle his books wearin gloves. He may be esteemed a what a Christian should be: h cannot be quoted as saying wha churches expect a Christian to sa It is only in a Unitarian church, o a most liberal other church, that hi books on Christian origins can b studied with sympathy. It must b said that certain Unitarians dislik Schweitzer on Jesus. J. F Weatherall could not abide him; F V. Holt admired. Those who follo Martineau rarely approve the ethic of Schweitzer: those who follo Wicksteed take naturally t Schweitzer.

Schweitzer is nearer to Castelli than to Servetus. When the fina book is written, it will be shown tha Schweitzer is a unique fusion of th Gospel of St. Mark and the Gospe of St. John, and this results from th fact that in his childhood he wo shipped in a church used by bot Catholic and Protestant.

In Europe and in Europea history, Schweitzer is and wi remain, in this generation, chief o the Liberal Christians. Those wh best know Schweitzer least wish t box him in a denomination. He ha out-soared the boundaries of th loyalties proper to church group He has always been, and will eve remain, as influence, a Libera Christian.

RESENTATION TO THE ETIRING EDITOR

At the December meeting of the anchester District Association of nitarian Churches, the president, ev. E. Nuttall, presented the Rev. thur Vallance, B.A., with a cheque hich had been subscribed by more an four hundred people. In his eech of thanks the president ferred to the excellent work done Mr. Vallance over such a long riod of years and said that the rge number of subscribers to the ft was ample testimony of the ccess of the former Editor of the Unitarian." The conclusion of his litorship ended a happy chapter in r. Vallance's life, Mr. Nuttall said, nd he expressed the wishes of all hen he wished him many more appy chapters. The president also esented Mr. Vallance with a typeriter, a gift from the Manchester istrict Association, for which body r. Vallance had edited the agazine.

In expressing thanks for the gifts Ir. Vallance said that they came as great surprise for him. He thanked very contributor for the lovely oken of friendship created through e magazine. He had not expected nything of the sort until Mrs. allance had insisted that this was ot a meeting of the M.D.A. that ould be missed, even for the special hoir practice he had arranged. Mr. allance said that in his twentyine years of editorship he had only nce missed making up the copy. On hat occasion it had been done by Rev. H. L. Short, one of a number f people who had been a great help o him in his work. These people, e concluded, and especially the Editorial Board, ought to share in he thanks that were being given to im.

The new Editor joins in the thanks eing extended to Mr. Vallance for he flourishing state of the magazine. He is relieved to know that Mr. Vallance is remaining on the Editorial Board.

FOR MEDITATION

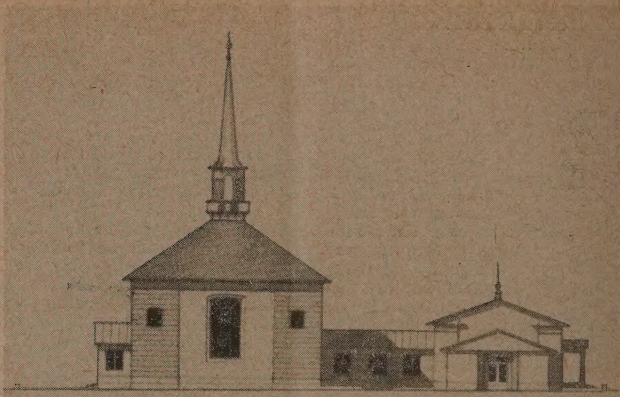
By Rev. T. J. Jones

In accepting the invitation to write a monthly "Meditation" column for 1959, I would like to begin by referring to the new Editor. Having had a small part to play in his progress to the Unitarian ministry, I would like to assure him of my sympathetic interest in, and my prayers for, his success in the new venture.

Which brings me to a theme for meditation at the beginning of a new year for us all. Here we are, in January, in the "bleak midwinter," desperately seeking for the right temperature and condition, physically, in which to work effectively. No less truly do we need a mental climate and atmosphere in which to produce our best living. With such, specific "new resolutions" are almost redundant; without it, they are still-born.

Let me illustrate the effect of an "atmosphere" by way of a mildly startling experience of very recent date. I attended a session of a local Debating Society which threatened to set the sparks flying. The motion was, "That Protestant Denominationalism is Un-Christian." It was to be affirmed by a Roman Catholic. I went to support a young Congregational minister who opposed. Instead of the prospective blow-up, such was the "climate" created by various speakers, that the chairman (an avowed agnostic), was induced not only not to press for the customary vote, but even to depart so far from the tradition of the Society as to voluntarily ask the Unitarian minister to close with prayer!

Now, it is a good thing to end with a prayer; it is better still to begin with one. Such prayer, and "meditation" on the Eternal can "condition" a man for all the problems of Time. As the psalmist said: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in due season. . . .and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."



EAST ELEVATION

PLYMOUTH'S NEW UNITARIAN CHURCH

By E. H. Kersley

The newest and the oldest Unitarian church buildings in the world are under one pastorate. They are respectively at Plymouth and Tavistock. Tavistock Abbey Chapel dating back to pre-Reformation days needs an article to itself. This article is about the newest Unitarian church. It is notable that the oldest and the newest should be for the moment under one minister.

Plymouth Unitarian Church, opened by the Rt. Hon. J. Chuter Ede, president of the General Assembly, on May 31st, 1958, is even now no longer the newest Unitarian Church. This title has already passed to Islington and will soon pass to Cross Street Chapel.

Although Unitarians are not very numerous in Plymouth, the opening ceremony was very crowded and well publicised. The new building in itself has attracted considerable interest in the neighbourhood. The architects have made it a very distinctive addition to a city of impressive modern buildings, and it is within two minutes' walk of Plymouth Hoe and the old Barbican Quay, from which the Pilgrim Fathers set sail.

The Treville Street building, destroyed by enemy action, was of the square meeting house type. Its site was compusorily purchased by the Corporation for town-planning purposes, and the new church in Notte Street is, like the old, square, but slightly smaller and without a gallery. It has seating for 210. For some years it will be a dual purpose building, for recreational and social meetings as well as public worship, so the platform, with the pulpit on one side and the organ on the other can be curtained off. It is hoped that in about seven years it will be possible to add a hall at the rear of the church, as shown in the architect's drawing.

The exterior of the church, with its portico and slender spire recalls the Georgian styled Unitarian churches in New England. As the building is a small one set among

uch larger buildings, the spire is esigned to give it height and disnction.

In the old church there were everal beautiful stained glass indows. The war damage comensation for these would not be ufficient for even one good window nder present conditions, so the ompensation is to be applied to a arge mural painting on the wall acing the congregation. The archiect considers, moreover, that the tyle of the building will be more onsistently maintained by a mural ainting than by stained glass. After the usual complications and elay, this mural painting has now een undertaken by Mr. H. Pickup, he teacher of Mural Painting at the lymouth School of Art, to be comleted within twelve months. Its ubject is "Christ commanding the torm," a theme full of stimulating ymbolism for to-day, and appropriate in an important seaport. The ortrayal of the Christ may well be link between Orthodox and Jnitarian thought and experience, nd an instance of the way in which iberal Religion looks at the Bible.

JNITARIANS IN THE NEWS

Joan, the only daughter of the Rev. and Mrs. Albert Smith, Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, has uccessfully passed her S.R.N. xamination at the Manchester Royal Infirmary and has also gained er hospital medal. Joan intends o enter one of the London hospitals or further training.

Miss Dorothy Openshaw recently ook first place in the aural section f the 1958 Blackpool Musical Festival. Entrants were from Lancahire and Yorkshire. This was the rst competition Dorothy has ntered; she is sixteen years old and his year's School Queen at Stand Jnitarian Chapel.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

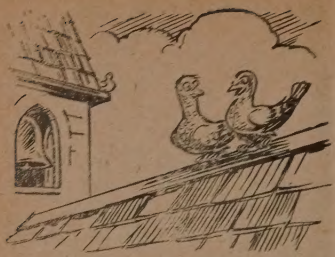
Introducing . . .

Hello, boys and girls! Now, to begin with, we must have one thing clear. You haven't met Raymond, have you? I thought not. In that case, I must introduce him and tell you a few things; because you will be reading a good deal about him during the next few months. Things happen to Raymond—often!

He is about ten and a half years old at the moment—he will be eleven later this year—and he lives next door to me. His parents and I are very old friends. He is an ordinary boy with nothing particular to mark him out from the rest; he looks and behaves like lots of boys of his age; but perhaps trouble finds him oftener! He has fair hair which always looks as if it never sees a comb (it does really, of course), a few freckles, stockings that never stay up and a general air of untidiness. This used to cause his mother some concern; but she doesn't worry now. She does her best to make him look neat, keeps her fingers crossed and is never too downcast when the clean and tidy Raymond soon becomes just the opposite.

We live on the outskirts of a large manufacturing town; and quite a number of Raymond's relatives live not far away. His family is completed by his sister Lisbeth. There are one or two uncles and aunts, grandparents on both sides and a whole host of cousins. Raymond has a lot of friends, too; as has Lisbeth. You will be meeting a good many of them from time to time. They both go to a big school nearby and attend the Sunday School and church to which their parents and I belong.

Oh, by the way! Lisbeth is just nine years old. I say "just" because she has only recently had her birthday. There was a party at which Raymond made quite an impression—as you will read next month.



"I hear we have changed Editors."
"Yes; another bird to shoot at—move over."

5,000 DOLLAR PURCHASE

All Souls' Unitarian Church, Manhattan, New York, whose minister, Dr. Walter Kring, is Hon. Secretary of the American Unitarian Association, and who attended the opening of Essex Hall, has bought a copy of the Ten Commandments found among the Dead Sea Scrolls for $5,000, though at present the scroll is not available for export.

LIKE A MIGHTY ARMY?

"Nine hundred leading scientists have petitioned the United Nations against the hydrogen bomb. We are still waiting for nine hundred leading clergymen to do as much."

Letter to the "Manchester Guardian.

STAND. On October 26th the Chapel Anniversary Services were conducted in the morning by Mr. Robert Southern, C.B.E., B.A., General Secretary of the Co-operative Union, and in the evening by the Rt. Hon. J. Chuter Ede, M.P. In November a series of special sermons on Unitarian faith and outlook were well advertised with discussions afterwards. A Boys' Club has been formed.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Visitors to the Conference of the International Association for Religious Freedom held last year in Chicago have been kept busy. The Reverends F. Kenworthy and B. Downing have both addressed Ministers' Fraternals. Among other visits Principal Kenworthy has spoken to the Priestley Society at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, and Mr. Downing to the Swinton Unitarian Society.

TODMORDEN presented the Christmas Masque "The Lord is Come" as part of special services at Christmas time. Membership of the Men's League has now reached fifty.

MILL HILL CHAPEL, LEEDS. Early in December the choir gave a concert which included excerpts from "Tom Jones." Proceeds were for the General Assembly 1959 Fund. After the Christmas Gift Service gifts were distributed among needy children in the city and the church's own sick and elderly members.

Among many interesting things done by members of BROADWAY AVENUE, BRADFORD, Elsie Newport translates scientific articles into Braille, a task formerly undertaken by James Tempest.

The annual report of the UNITARIAN BROTHERHOOD CHURCH, LAGOS, makes very interesting reading (speaking only for the part in English). A Christ Youth Fellowship has been formed "to promote a spirit of Christian worship, liberal religion and youth activities." The Harvest Thanksgiving in December had a collection of £90. The fruit went to the Children's Orthopaedic Hospital, Igbobi. Ten guineas were sent to the Essex Hall Rebuilding Fund.

Recent services in the SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, UNITARIAN CHURCH have been conducted by Miss Marie Byles, Sydney's first woman solicitor, Rabbi Dr. R. Brasch and Mr. Colin S. Dence. Mr. Dence, secretary of the London Lay Preachers' Union and Bessels Green Old Meeting

House was on a tour of the Far East and Australia. A gift of £250 has started a fund to buy a new organ.

ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, recently celebrated its one hundred and third anniversary.

After two services held in connection with Altrincham the WYTHENSHAWE congregation is now worshipping in the class room wing of its new building. It is hoped that the new church will be ready for opening early in April.

The Minister's Letter in the October issue of the BLACKLEY Calendar was published in the "County Express" and "Crumpsall Guardian" and precipitated correspondence between the minister and the Rector of St. Peter's Church, Blackley. Since then the Minister and Rector have been meeting weekly to exchange points of view.

Sales of Work have been in the news in the weeks before Christmas. Pendleton raised £161, Swinton £260 and Urmston £75.

DUKINFIELD Choir Festival presented Gaul's "The Holy City" on Sunday, November 30th. Members of the choir sang solos and the Ryecroft Vocal Society was responsible for the choruses.

The NORTH CHESHIRE Unitarian Sunday School Union held a One-day School at Stalybridge in November. Thirty-two people were present from six schools. Principal Kenworthy was the speaker at the two sessions, the first on "Who are these Unitarians?" and the second "What do they believe?" Discussion followed each session, each of three groups was lead by a student from Unitarian College.

"Fellow Travellers" of Parkinson's Parties are to hold a Grand Easter Re-union in SCARBOROUGH, where Rev. G. W. Parkinson is now minister. They will see Scarborough by day and relive Continental holidays by night.

Greetings from different parts of the world have welcomed Rev. Basil Viney into his ministry at LEWES AND DITCHLING.

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"I'M NOT RELIGIOUS BUT—"
By Arthur Peacock
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BUSY PRESIDENT

The Rt. Hon. J. Chuter Ede, M.P., president of the General Assembly, is one of three Members of Parliament chosen by the Speaker to present the new mace to the newly-formed Caribbean Federation.

On March 21st of this year the president will open the new Cross Street Chapel, Manchester. The following day he will be preaching at Accrington, and on Monday, March 23rd, he will address the Annual General Meeting of the Manchester District Association. It is hoped that it will be possible to hold this meeting in the new Cross Street Chapel.

MY SUBSCRIPTION

I recently received a reminder that my annual subscription to a certain organisation is now due. I joined it more than 20 years ago with a subscription of five shillings. I was informed that this sum is now worth only 1s. 10d. If my subscription is to do the same amount of work for the organisation as it did at first, it ought to be something like 13s. 4d. The annual report said:

"Most of us are aware of the declining value of money since 1939. I wonder whether we are all conscious of how much depreciation has occurred even since 1946. Where we have little choice in the matter, such as paying for food, rents, rates, clothes and so on, we have absorbed more or less the increases in the cost of living. When it comes to voluntary giving we often tend to overlook the fact that money doesn't go so far when our church or our charity uses it."

So I worked out the value of my 1945 subscription. A 1s. contribution in 1945 should now be 1s. 7½d. A 5s. contribution should now be 8s. 2d. And a £10 donation of 1938 should now be £26. If someone would like to emulate the £10 of some munificent pre-1914 benefactor, perhaps £50 would meet the occasion.

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